

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:89

ANSWERED ON:11.12.2013

WORKERS REPATRIATED FROM GULF COUNTRIES

Panda Shri Baijayant;Thomas Shri P. T.

**Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether a large number of Indian workers employed in various Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia face the threat of repatriation due to implementation of stringent domestic labour laws including 'Nitaqat Policy' and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of the total number of such affected workers reported to have returned/ repatriated from various Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, during the last one year, month and State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has taken up the issue with such countries including Saudi Arabia for legalizing their status and providing any other form of assistance and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the details of the steps being taken/ proposed to be taken by the Government to rehabilitate returnees from the Gulf?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement as referred to in reply to the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 89 for 11-12-2013 regarding 'Workers Repatriated from Gulf Countries'.

(a) & (b): Stricter implementation of labour laws including 'Nitaqat' has only affected those workers who do not have valid documents to stay and work in the host country.

In case of Saudi Arabia, 'Nitaqat' was implemented in order to streamline their labour market and identifying illegal workers. However, as the grace period has been extended twice (first up to 3rd July, 2013 and then up to 3rd November, 2013), the policy has not had any significant adverse impact on Indian workers in Saudi Arabia except on those who were working there without proper valid documents. The grace period allows even workers without valid papers to have their status regularized.

In Saudi Arabia, more than 1.4 million Indians availed concessions during the grace period. This includes 4,34,667 Indians who transferred their services to other firms, who are 'Nitaqat' compliant. Additionally 4,81,233 Indians changed their jobs/profession. Apart from this over 4,70,000 Indians got their licenses/job permits renewed.

During the grace period, Embassy of India, Riyadh received 66,729 applications for issue of Emergency Certificates (ECs), out of which, 41,283 Emergency Certificates were issued. Similarly, 26,600 applications were received in the Consulate General of India, Jeddha and out of which, 23,486 ECs were issued. State-wise statement of applications for ECs received and issued by the Indian Missions in Saudi Arabia is given at Annexure. The number of Indians who left on final exit availing the grace period (as on November 27, 2013) is 1, 41,301. They left without facing any penal action and with no ban on their return to Saudi Arabia on a new visa.

(c): India maintained high-level engagement with the Saudi leadership through our Mission and through Ministerial visits to impress upon Saudi authorities to have humanitarian approach to the workers without proper documents. A Ministerial delegation comprising Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Minister of state for External Affairs and Advisor to Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia in April, 2013. It was followed up by the official visit of Minister of External Affairs to Saudi Arabia in May, 2013.

Indian Missions remained in regular touch with the host Government as well as emigrants for redressal of grievances of the workers.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has (a) waived off a fee of 7 Saudi Riyals for contribution to Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) to issue Emergency Certificate (EC), (b) allowed Missions/Posts to bear cost of processing of EC of 40 Saudi Riyals per person, and to provide temporary accommodation, transportation, food etc. to Indian workers in need,

(c) to make use of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) to meet small penalties/fines in respect of workers who may require such payments for being permitted to return to India and

(d) Ministry of Civil Aviation had been requested for issuance of concessional return tickets for the Indians in distress.

On need basis and deserving cases, the Mission can also utilize ICWF for one way air ticket for repatriation of an Indian emigrant.

Special Help Desks were set up by Mission for helping the distressed Indians. Missions' 24X7 helpline was provided with more lines and Embassy mobile units were set up at the labour offices and tarheels (exit visa offices) all over Saudi Arabia and at major airports. Tents were erected, desert coolers were provided and when required, food and water was distributed to those who approached the missions.

Passports were issued by the Missions expeditiously to those Indians who wanted to change/ regularize their residency/work permit status but could not do so due to lack of passports. The Missions organized major job fair to enable the expatriate Indians to correct their job status.

(d): The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs had called meetings of Ministries/representatives of major labour sending States twice, the first on 09-04-2013 and the second on 25-06-2013. The State Governments were requested to formulate rehabilitation programmes for returnees from the Gulf, using existing State and Central Government programmes/schemes.